

Snow Call: You've got questions, we've got answers
Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst Public Affairs

The average yearly snowfall for New Jersey is 23 inches. With all of this snow the Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst Public Affairs Office has been hard at work assuring the joint base community is aware of road conditions and base status.

The joint base weather lines, (609) 754-BASE and (732) 323-SNOW, have received record numbers of calls, the JB MDL Facebook page has increased fellowship by thousands, Twitter followers have reached triple digits and the newest tool, the My Base Guide app, alerts users automatically when Public Affairs personnel make an update.

With so many options available to get information, there have been many questions and concerns from the joint community. The Joint Base PA office has taken some of the most frequently asked adverse weather questions, and responded below.

Let's put those concerns to rest and find out what goes on behind the scenes when making the snow calls and announcing those desired words "Due to severe weather conditions, Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst is currently closed."

Q. What time is base closure information posted? Employees should be able to plan for the next day earlier and the postings should be consistent.

Base status is announced at approximately 5 a.m. the day the base is impacted by adverse weather.

We understand people would like to receive the notification on whether or not they have to report to work the night before but in many situations we don't know what type of weather we will face when we wake-up the next morning. In addition, our civil engineers work throughout the night to clean-up the base; therefore, they may have made progress that would enable personnel to come to work.

All of these factors are considered and weighed heavily when the joint base commander hosts a 'Snow Conference Call' at 4 a.m. During this conference call, we discuss Civil Engineering's clean-up progress, the snow/ice accumulation, and poll the major mission partner commanders on their thoughts before the joint base commander makes a final determination. Once a decision is made, we work on the message and disseminate it as quickly as possible, hopefully no later than 5:30 a.m.

Remember, we have a military installation to run with missions important to our country and our nation's defense and we will do everything we can to keep it operational while ensuring the safety of those who live and work on Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst. As always, we encourage individuals concerned with their safety to contact their chain of command to determine the best course of action possible.

Q. How do I know if I am mission essential personnel?

Consult your chain of command if you have any questions regarding your reporting status. Your supervisor is responsible for letting you know whether or not you are mission essential.

Q. According to the weather line, the base is open and personnel should report as normal. But, there is 10 feet of snow blocking my front door and my streets haven't been plowed at all. How do you expect me to get into work?

When we determine the base status, we are taking weather, road conditions and mission priorities into consideration. Our primary concern is our service members and civilian personnel. We encourage individuals concerned with their safety to contact their chain of command to determine the best course of action possible.

Q. I called my unit's inclement weather line, and it said the base was open. But, when I called 754-BASE, the message stated the base was closed. Which do I believe?

The official joint base inclement weather status will be posted on (609) 754-BASE and (732) 323-SNOW.

Each mission partner will determine which personnel are mission essential or not. Our office works very hard to assure these lines are updated as quickly as possible.

Q. During the last snow storm, when I called 754-BASE or 323-SNOW, the lines kept ringing and the message never played. Are there issues with the system?

Our information lines did crash during the last storm, because of calls that were coming in. The second we realized our lines were down and that we were having technical difficulties, the 87th Communications Squadron fixed the problem. We don't know why this happened, but our communications experts are working to ensure this doesn't happen again.

As a secondary precaution we update our Facebook, Twitter and My Base Guide app to reflect base structure.

Q. I am not a member of Facebook. Can I still see the weather updates? When I type in the web address, all I see is a welcome message.

Yes, even non-Facebook users can access the updates. Simply click on the 'Wall' tab at the top of the page. In order to only see updates from JB MDL (without the communication traffic from other members), click on "Just Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst" on JB MDL's wall.

Q. The Twitter page only had a brief two sentence status, without any details or any explanations. Why use it if it is not informative?

Twitter only allows 140 character postings. We put the basics into the 140 characters and always refer people back to our other social media sites and informational lines. As much as we'd like to, we cannot change the character amount Twitter offers.

Q. Facebook and other social media sites confuse me. What if I prefer not to get my information from there?

Facebook is just one of the tools our office uses to get the word out. Although we have noticed an exponential increase in 'fans' during every severe weather occurrence, we understand social media is not for everyone. You can opt to call into the information lines or download the My Base Guide app on mobile phones to receive update alerts. Also, remember, you can always use your chain of command if you are unsure about whether or not you should report to work.

Q. What does "mission essential" mean?

Mission, Weather Essential A and Emergency Essential. Individuals designated in advance to maintain service, activities, schedules and needed to restore the base to limited operations regardless of any dismissal authorization due to weather.

Mission, Weather Essential B and Emergency Essential. Individuals designated in advance to maintain and support limited operations.

Non-Essential. Individuals not designated as mission, weather essential A and B or emergency essential.

Q. If I still have questions about my reporting instructions, who should I contact for clarification?

Contact your supervisor.

Q. Does the base take into consideration the local school closures and schedules?

Yes. During and/or before inclement weather, base leadership convenes on a conference call to determine the base status and reporting instructions. The local schools also dial in so the base can take the school closures into consideration.

Q. What are the phone numbers for the information lines?

There are two numbers that can be called, (609)754-BASE and (323) 723-SNOW.

For more information on joint base inclement weather messages, check out the fact sheet “Just the facts: Delayed reporting, road conditions clarified” at

<http://www.jointbasemdl.af.mil/library/factsheets/factsheet.asp?fsID=17327>.